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Testimony

In Support of PHB 6049 An Act Concerning Facilities of Colleges That Offer Mortuary Sciences

Public Health Committee
February 27, 2009

Representative Ritter, Senator Harris and members of the Public Health Committee, thank you for raising PHB 6049 An Act Concerning Facilities of Colleges that Offer Mortuary Sciences. I am writing in support of this bill.

I have been a licensed embalmer and funeral director in the State of Connecticut for over thirty years and have had the privilege to teach future funeral professionals at Briarwood College since retiring from the Connecticut State Capitol Police in 2005. In the last thirty years, I have witnessed numerous changes in the profession. Advancement in technology; beepers and now cell phones has given funeral personnel freedom from babysitting phones. Women have dominated the profession (which I believe is a good thing; the majority of Briarwood's mortuary students are female). Societal changes have fostered an increase in cremation, pre-need funeral contracts and new federal guidelines on how funeral professionals conduct business. However, with all these changes there remains one constant; the embalming preparation for funeralization of the dead.

The American Board of Funeral Service Education, (ABFSE) the only accrediting body for all mortuary colleges, shares this view. They, (ABFSE) have implemented a new policy that dictates in order to remain accredited; a college of mortuary science will have to have an embalming preparation room by September 2010. Currently, statutes allow for embalming to take place only in a funeral service business. Many of my colleagues have questioned the prudence of this policy because there may be problems ascertaining bodies for students to embalm. I have contacted several funeral home professionals in the area. Many have agreed to help provide bodies for students as long they were under the tutelage of a qualified instructor.

As a funeral director and embalmer, I have had the privilege not only to serve countless numbers of grieving families over the last thirty years but now to train others in this time honored profession. Please support this bill so educators in the mortuary science field can facilitate the best in their students, so they in turn, can serve others in their greatest time of need.

Respectively submitted,

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Program Director of Mortuary Science